

WHEN YOU VISIT

Jack London State Historic Park was created in 1959 when a small portion – about 40 acres – of London's 1,400-acre Beauty Ranch was acquired by the state, partly through a gift from Irving Shepard, London's nephew and an heir to the London estate. The original park included London's grave, the ruins of Wolf House, and Charnian London's House of Happy Walls.

Additional acreage has been added over the years, so that today the park contains more than 800 acres, including many of the ranch buildings and the cottage where London wrote much of his later work.

The House of Happy Walls

Built by Charnian London in 1919-26, this house is similar to Wolf House in some ways – the Spanish-style roof tiles and walls of field stone, for example – but is much smaller and more formal. Charnian lived here whenever she was not traveling abroad or staying with relatives. After her death in 1955 at the age of 84, her will directed that the house be used as a memorial to Jack London and as a museum that would house the London collection of photographs and exhibits about the life and adventures of the world-famous author. It also contains a park visitor center where you can purchase books by and about Jack London.

Much of the furniture in the house was designed by the Londons and custom-built for use in Wolf House. The library is furnished with equipment from London's study. The big roll-top desk, the dictaphone, and some of the other items on exhibit here appear in old photographs showing London at work.



Wolf House

The trail to Wolf House is a little over a half-mile long and slopes gently downhill. It is recommended that you allow an hour or more for the one-mile trip. The trail wanders through a beautiful mixed forest of oaks, madrones, California buckeye, Douglasfir, and redwoods. Ferns, manzanita, and a wide range of other shrubs and small flowering plants (Indian warrior, hound's tongue, buttercups, poppies) thrive in this area along with many kinds of birds and other forms of wildlife.

The remains of Wolf House still vividly remind visitors of Jack and Charnian's original dream. Stone walls complete with window openings, fireplaces, and other details appear little changed by the passage of time. They make it easy to see how grand the house was intended to be.

Native materials were chosen and carefully matched to one another – boulders of maroon lava, unpeeled redwood logs outside and redwood paneling inside. The Spanish-style roof was dark red and matched the stone walls. The long outdoor pool was to be stocked with mountain bass. Inside, there was a library and above that, isolated from the rest of the house, a large workshop for Jack. A fireproof vault in the basement was designed to house his collection of manuscripts and other valuables. The two-story livingroom featured a massive fireplace and an alcove for Charnian's grand piano. The dining room could seat as many as fifty people, and there were numerous guest rooms. Downstairs there was a big game room for men only.

The entire house stood on an extra-thick concrete slab that was intended to be earthquake proof. Double-



The Grave Site

Jack London's ashes were placed on the little hill close beside the plain wooden headboards that marked the graves of two pioneer children. The final ceremony was simple and without ritual, attended only by a few members of London's immediate family, his old friend George Sterling, and workmen from the ranch. A small copper urn wreathed with primroses and bearing his ashes was sealed within a specially made cement receptacle and, in Sterling's own words:

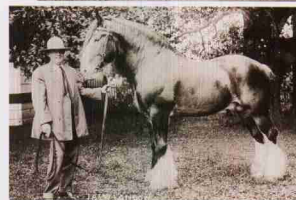
"Amid the profound silence of the on-lookers, a huge boulder – a great block of red lava long-pitted by time and enriched by the moss of uncounted years – was urged by roller and crowbar above the sepulcher. Then the party dispersed as quietly as it had gathered, the stillness making it a funeral impressive beyond all memory of those in attendance."

"No word, aside from a brief whisper, had been said. The thirteen strong men of the ranch faced the bearers of the remains in silence, and as silently departed."

thick concrete walls were intended to be fireproof. Modern utility systems were installed and every detail of hardware or trim was of the very highest quality, for money was no object. The house was supposed to be magnificent.



The Snark
Jack and Charnian
aboard the Snark.



VALLEY OF THE MOON
NATURAL HISTORY ASSOCIATION
2400 London Ranch Road . Glen Ellen, CA 95442

A non-profit association dedicated to promoting education and interpretive activities at Jack London, Sugarloaf Ridge, and Annadel State Parks, by publishing descriptive park literature, and providing trained volunteer docents. Memberships are welcome and donations are tax-deductible.



Pete Wilson, Governor
Douglas P. Wheeler, Secretary for Resources
Donald W. Murphy, Director, Dept. Parks & Recreation



JACK LONDON STATE HISTORIC PARK
2400 London Ranch Road
Glen Ellen, California 95442
(707) 938-5216

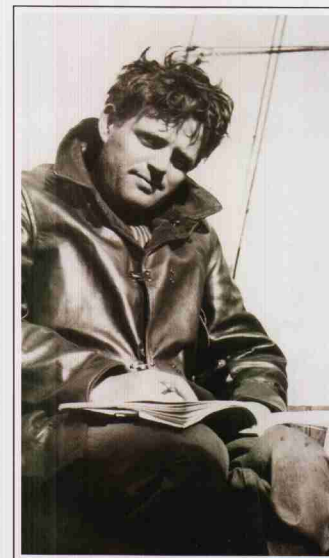
- Picnic Tables and barbeque pits are available; ground fires and portable stoves are prohibited.
- Please observe the park hours as posted at the entrance station. The museum in the House of Happy Walls is open from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily except Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Years Day.
- There are a few rattlesnakes, so be alert for them as well as for poison oak.
- Dogs must be kept on a leash; they are not allowed in the museum or on hiking trails.
- Don't trespass on private property surrounding the park; help us be good neighbors.



CALIFORNIA STATE PARKS

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Jack London State Historic Park



CALIFORNIA STATE PARKS



"I would rather be ashes than dust!
I would rather
that my spark should burn out in a brilliant blaze
than it should be stifled by dryrot.
I would rather be a superb meteor,
every atom of me in magnificent glow,
than a sleepy and permanent planet.
The proper function of man is to live, not to exist.
I shall not waste my days in trying to prolong them.
I shall use my time."

Jack London

Jack London fought his way up out of the factories and waterfront dives of West Oakland to become the highest paid, most popular novelist and short story writer of his day. He wrote passionately and prolifically about the great questions of life and death, the struggle to survive with dignity and integrity, and he wove these elemental ideas into stories of high adventure based on his own firsthand experiences at sea, or in Alaska, or in the fields and factories of California. As a result, his writing appealed not to the few, but to millions of people all around the world.

Along with his books and stories, however, Jack London was widely known for his personal exploits. He was a celebrity, a colorful and controversial personality who was often in the news. Generally fun-loving and playful, he could also be combative, and was quick to side with the underdog against injustice or oppression of any kind. He was a fiery and eloquent public speaker, and much sought after as a lecturer on socialism and other economic and political topics. Despite his avowed socialism, most people considered him a living symbol of rugged individualism, a man whose fabulous success was due not to special favor of any kind, but to a combination of unusual mental ability and immense vitality.

Strikingly handsome, full of laughter, restless and courageous to a fault, always eager for adventure on land or sea, he was one of the most attractive and romantic figures of his time.

Jack London ascribed his literary success largely to hard work — to "dig," as he put it. He tried never to miss his early morning 1,000-word writing stint, and between 1900 and 1916 he completed over fifty books, including both fiction and non-fiction, hundreds of short stories, and numerous articles on a wide range of topics. Several of the books and many of the short stories are classics of their kind, well thought of in critical terms and still popular around the world. Today, almost countless editions of London's writings are available and some of them have been translated into as many as seventy different languages.

In addition to his daily writing stint and his commitments as lecturer, London also carried on voluminous correspondence (he received some 10,000 letters per year), read proofs of his work as it went to press, negotiated with his various agents and publishers, and conducted other business such as overseeing

construction of his custom-built sailing ship, the *Snark* (1906-1907), the construction of Wolf House (1910-1913), and the operation of his beloved Beauty Ranch, which became a primary preoccupation after about 1911. Along with all this, he had to continually generate new ideas for books and stories and do the research so necessary to his writing.

Somehow he managed to do all these things and still find time to go swimming, horseback riding, or sailing on San Francisco Bay. He also spent 27 months cruising the South Pacific in the *Snark*, put in two tours of duty as an overseas war correspondent, traveled widely for pleasure, entertained a continual stream of guests whenever he was at home in Glen Ellen, and did his fair share of barroom socializing and debating. In order to fit all this living into the narrow confines of one lifetime, he often tried to make do with no more than four or five hours of sleep per night.

London was first attracted to the Sonoma Valley by its magnificent natural landscape, a unique combination of high hills, fields and streams, and a beautiful mixed forest of oaks, madrones, California buckeyes, Douglasfir, and redwood trees. "When I first came here, tired of cities and people, I settled down on a little farm . . . 130 acres of the most beautiful, primitive land to be found in California." He didn't care that the farm was badly run-down. Instead, he reveled in its deep canyons and forests, its year-round springs and streams. "All I wanted," he said later, "was a quiet place in the country to write and loaf in and get out of Nature that something which we all need, only the most of us don't know it." Soon, however, he was busy buying farm equipment and livestock for his "mountain ranch." He also began work on a new barn and started planning a fine new house. "This is to be no summer-residence proposition," he wrote to his publisher in June 1905, "but a home all the year round. I am anchoring good and solid, and anchoring for keeps. . . ."

Born January 12, 1876, he was only 29, but he was already internationally famous for *Call of the Wild* (1903), *The Sea Wolf* (1904), and other literary and journalistic accomplishments. He was divorced from Bessie (Maddern), his first wife and the mother of his two daughters, Joan and Little Bess, and he had married Charmian (Kittredge).

Living and owning land near Glen Ellen was a way of escaping from Oakland — from the city way of life he

called "the man-trap." But excited as he was about his plans for the ranch, London was still too restless, too eager for foreign travel and adventure, to settle down and spend all his time there. While his barn and other ranch improvements were still under construction he decided to build a ship and go sailing around the world — exploring, writing, adventuring — enjoying the "big moments of living" that he craved and that would give him still more material to write about.

The great voyage was to last seven years and take Jack and Charmian around the world. In fact it lasted 27 months and took them "only" as far as the South Pacific and Australia. Discouraged by a variety of health problems, and heartbroken about having to abandon the trip and sell the *Snark*, London returned to Glen Ellen and to his plans for the ranch.

In 1909, '10, and '11 he bought more land, and in 1911 moved from Glen Ellen to a small ranch house in the middle of his holdings. He rode horseback throughout the countryside, exploring every canyon, glen, and hilltop. And he threw himself into farming — scientific agriculture — as one of the few justifiable, basic, and idealistic ways of making a living. A significant portion of his later writing — *Burning Daylight* (1910), *Valley of the Moon* (1913), *Little Lady of the Big House* (1916) — had to do with the simple pleasures of country life, the satisfaction of making a living directly and honestly from the land and thereby remaining close to the realities of the natural world.

Jack and Charmian London's dream house began to take definite shape early in 1911 as Albert Farr, a well-known San Francisco architect, put their ideas on paper in the form of drawings and sketches, and then supervised the early stages of construction. It was to be a grand house — one that would remain standing for a thousand years. By August 1913, London had spent approximately \$80,000 (in pre-World War I dollars), and the project was nearly complete. On August 22 final cleanup got underway and plans



were laid for moving the Londons' specially designed, custom-built furniture and other personal belongings into the mansion. That night — at 2 a.m. — word came that the house was burning. By the time the Londons arrived on the scene the house was ablaze in every corner, the roof had collapsed, and even a stack of lumber some distance away was burning. Nothing could be done.

London looked on philosophically, but inside he was seriously wounded for the loss was a crushing financial blow and the wreck of a long-cherished dream. Worse yet, he also had to face the probability that the fire had been deliberately set — perhaps by someone close to him. To this day, the mystery remains unsolved. London planned to rebuild Wolf House eventually, but at the time of his death in 1916 the house remained as it stands today, the stark but eloquent vestige of a unique and fascinating but shattered dream.

The destruction of Wolf House left London terribly depressed, but after a few days he forced himself to go back to work. Using a \$2,000 advance from *Cosmopolitan Magazine*, he added a new study to the little wood-frame ranch house in which he had been living since 1911. Here, in the middle of his beloved ranch, he continued to turn out the articles, short stories, and novels for which there was an ever-growing international market.

From time to time he went east to meet with his publishers in New York, or to San Francisco or Los Angeles on other business. He also spent a considerable amount of time living and working aboard his 30-foot yawl, the *Roamer*, which he loved to sail around San Francisco Bay and throughout the nearby Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta. In 1914 he went to Mexico as a war correspondent covering the role of U.S. troops and Navy ships in the Villa-Carranza revolt.

In 1915 and again in 1916 Charmian persuaded him to spend several months in Hawaii, where he seemed better able to relax and more willing to take care of himself. His greatest satisfaction, however, came from his ranch activities and from his ever more ambitious plans for expanding the ranch and increasing its productivity. These plans kept him perpetually in debt and under intense pressure to keep on writing as fast as he could even though it might mean sacrificing quality in favor of quantity.

His doctors urged him to ease up, to change his work habits and his diet, to stop all use of alcohol, and

to get more exercise. But he refused to change his way of life, and plunged on with his writing and his ranch, generously supporting friends and relations through it all. If anything, the press of his financial commitments and his increasingly severe health problems only made him expand his ambitions, dream even larger dreams, and work still harder and faster.

On November 22, 1916, Jack London died of gastrointestinal uremic poisoning. He was 40 years of age and had been suffering from a variety of ailments including a kidney condition that was extraordinarily painful at times. Nevertheless, right up to the last day of his life he was full of bold plans and boundless enthusiasm for the future.

Words of grief poured into the telegraph office in Glen Ellen from all over the world and from a wide variety of people.

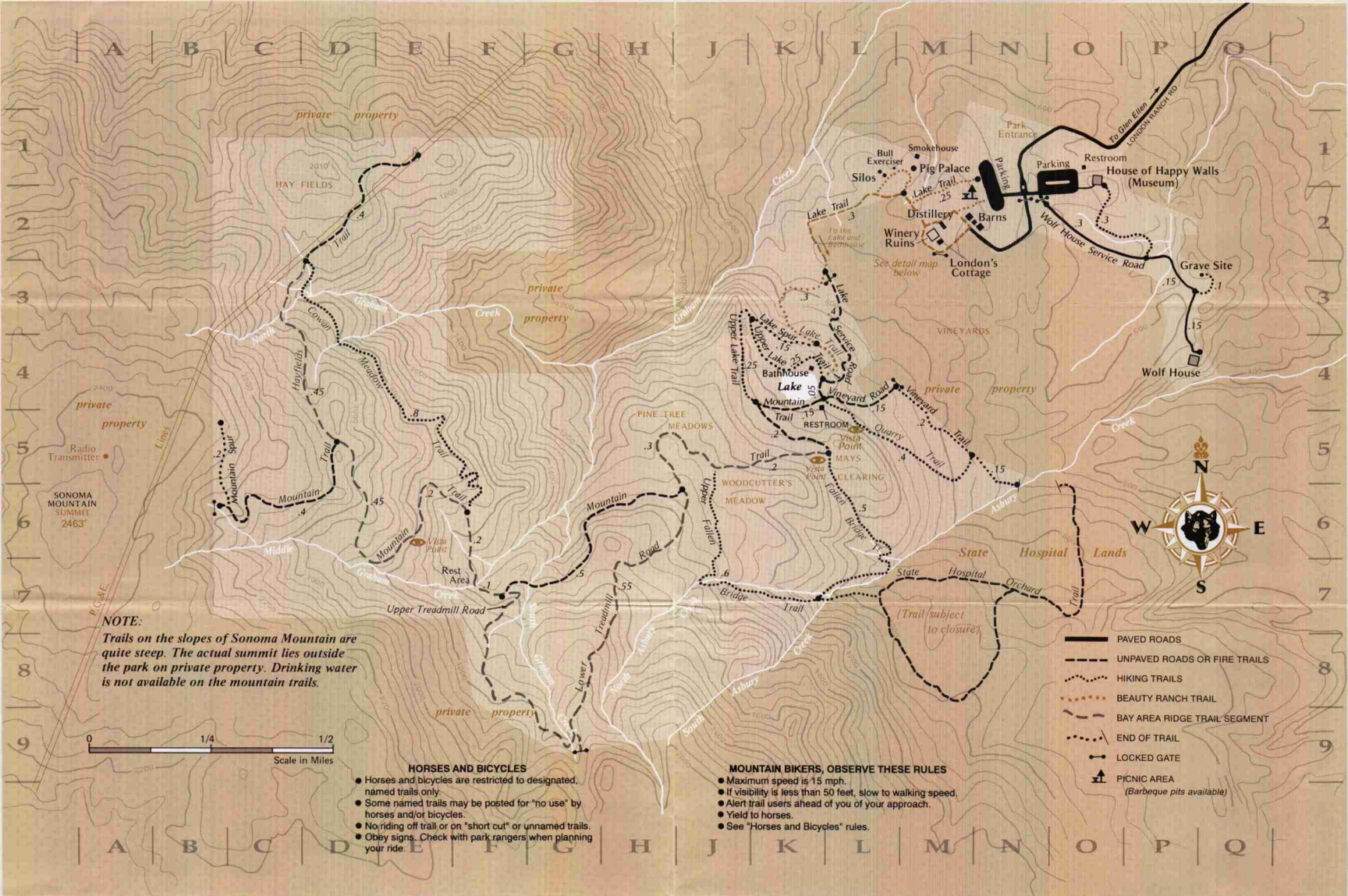
"No writer, unless it were Mark Twain, ever had a more romantic life than Jack London. The untimely death of this most popular of American fictionists has profoundly shocked a world that expected him to live and work for many years longer." (Ernest J. Hopkins in the *San Francisco Bulletin*, December 2, 1916)

"He will be missed around here, all right," said one of the workmen on the ranch, "for he was mighty good to us, and there never was a man who came here who went away hungry."

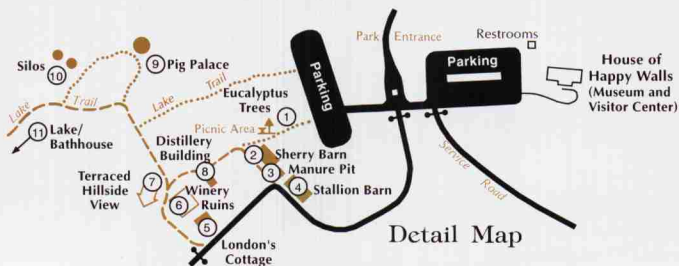
"No matter what he said or did, his ever present kindness held you. He could say the rashest and brashiest things, hurt your feelings and make you like it. . . because there was no personal sting. He was one of the most lovable characters of his age." (Ed Morrell, ex-convict and personal friend)

"His greatness will surge triumphantly above race and time," said his old friend George Sterling. His genius was "so flaming, so passionate, and so sincere" that it would overwhelm the limits of "prejudice and nationality."





The Beauty Ranch Trail



"I liked those hills up there (above the ranch house). They were beautiful, as you see, and I wanted beauty. So I extended the boundary (of the ranch) up to the top of that ridge and all along it. . . I bought beauty, and I was content with beauty for awhile. It pleases me more than anything else now, but I am putting this ranch into first class shape and am laying a foundation for a good paying industry here. Everything I build is for the years to come."

JACK LONDON



This half-mile-long trail circles through the center of the 1,400 acres of land that London called his "Beauty Ranch." Between 1905 and 1916, London planted fruit, grain, and vegetable crops in this area, and raised fine horses, pigs, cattle, and other animals as breeding stock. Many of the buildings were designed and built by London as part of his effort to develop and demonstrate new agricultural techniques that could be shared with farmers everywhere.

1 EUCALYPTUS TREES

From the picnic area one can see some of the 81,000 eucalyptus trees that were planted on the ranch. Although advertised at the time as an excellent source of hardwood, they proved to be better suited for firewood than anything else.

2 THE SHERRY BARN

This building was constructed by Chinese laborers in 1884 for the Kohler & Frohling winery. Originally used to make sherry, London converted it into a stable for his English shire horses. Luther Burbank's spineless cactus was grown for cattle feed in the open area between the barns and London's cottage. Burbank prunes and potatoes were also raised on the ranch.

3 MANURE PIT

Jack London hired Italian stonemasons in 1914 to build this "pit" to store fertilizer for later distribution in the fields. In addition, London also had an elaborate system built to gather and store liquid fertilizer from his cow barn.

4 STALLION BARN

This barn housed six of London's highly prized purebred shire horses. Note the contrast in construction techniques between the Italian-built structures (those with protruding stones in the walls) and the Chinese-built winery buildings (stones flush with the wall).

5 THE "COTTAGE"

This wood-framed "cottage" was purchased by London in 1911 along with the old Kohler & Frohling winery buildings. It was enlarged after 1911 until it included some 3,000 square feet of living space. The room on the west side was added in 1914 to serve as Jack's study. Here he wrote many of his later stories and novels. The stone-walled east wing of the house was originally constructed as part of the old winery. The Londons used it as a dining room. The glassed porch to the right of the front door is where Jack died November 22, 1916.

6 WINERY RUINS

This building, the main Kohler & Frohling winery, was heavily damaged by the 1906 earthquake. London used it as a carriage house, living quarters for ranch hands, and rooms for his many guests. A fire destroyed the wooden upper stories in 1965.

7 TERRACED HILLSIDES VIEW

London had his steeper fields graded into terraces in order to retain moisture and prevent erosion. As you can see in the vineyard areas, some of those original terraces are still being used today.

8 DISTILLERY BUILDING

Originally constructed in 1888 as part of the old winery, this building was used by London's ranch hands to store and repair farm equipment. The ruins of a blacksmith shop can be seen on the west side.

9 PIG PALACE

Often referred to as the "Pig Palace," this unique pigery was designed by London and built in 1915. Laid out in a circle to save labor, the pigery's central feedhouse is surrounded by 17

pens. Each family of pigs had its own area: a courtyard with feed and water troughs, roofed sleeping area, and a fenced outdoor run.

10 SILOS

Erected between 1912 and 1915, these cement-block silos stand over forty feet high. They once held silage — fodder, made by cutting up green forage plants.

11 THE LAKE

About three-quarters of a mile up the trail beyond the silos, London built a curving stone dam and created a shallow, five-acre lake. With its rustic redwood bathhouse, it was a favorite spot for the Londons and their many guests.

Beyond the lake the trail passes through a mixed forest of madrone, manzanita, redwood, and Douglasfir interspersed with grassy meadows and oak woodland. There are impressive vistas of the Valley of the Moon as you approach the park boundary just below the 2,463-foot summit of Sonoma Mountain. The strenuous 6.6-mile round trip takes about three hours. Be sure to bring your own drinking water.

